

In the Claims:

Cancel claims 4 and 7 without estoppel or disclaimer of the subject matter thereof, and amend claims 1 and 14, as follows:

1. (Currently Amended) An apparatus for performing a surgical procedure in tissue, comprising:

an inner cannula having an elongated body and a tip that is positioned at a distal end of the elongated body and that is configured to dissect tissue; ~~and~~

an outer expandable sheath disposed about the inner cannula and including first and second shells disposed to contact tissue and configured as substantially half cylindrical segments adjacently aligned along longitudinal edges thereof to expand in an outward direction against tissue in contact therewith responsive to the tip of the inner cannula slidably passing longitudinally in a proximal direction through the sheath for removal therefrom; and

a resilient connector attached between the first and second shells for resiliently urging a distal end of the first shell toward a distal end of the second shell to form an inner dimension at the distal end of the outer expandable sheath smaller than the outer dimension of the tip positioned distally of the distal end of the outer expandable sheath.

2.-10. (Cancelled)

11. (Withdrawn) An elongated cannula for performing endoscopic procedures comprising:

an instrument lumen within the cannula having an access port positioned at a proximal end of the cannula for receiving instruments into the instrument lumen;

an endoscopic lumen disposed within the cannula;

a wire lumen within the cannula;

a wire positioned within the wire lumen having a distal end attached to a distal end of the cannula; and

an articulating lever positioned near the proximal end of the cannula attached to the proximal end of the wire, for tensioning the wire in a first position to deflect a distal portion of the cannula out of alignment with a proximal portion of the cannula, and for relaxing the wire in a second position of the lever to orient the distal portion of the cannula substantially in alignment with the proximal end of the cannula.

12. (Withdrawn) The elongated cannula according to claim 11 including an endoscope disposed within the cannula including an endoscopic eyepiece disposed near a proximal end of the endoscope in skewed angular orientation relative to the elongated cannula and out of alignment with the access port of the instrument lumen and lever to avoid spatial interference of the eyepiece with the lever and with instruments received in the instrument lumen.

13. (Cancelled)

14. (Currently Amended) The apparatus according to claim 1 including an elongated handle eccentrically attached near a proximal end of the ~~inner cannula~~ outer sheath and displaced laterally substantially in said outward direction.